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Farm Broadcasters Letter



Letter No. 2303

March 12, 1987

DEMAND FOR U.S. CORN

The purchase of 1 million 500 thousand tons of U.S. corn by Japan, and 600 thousand by Korea during the past month suggests that these two countries' demand for reliable supplies of corn is increasing, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This is reinforced by the expectation of a decline in exportable supplies of Argentine corn and uncertainty over the availability of S. African and Chinese corn. With these corn purchases, Japan is now committed to buying 7 million 700 thousand tons of U.S. corn in 1986/87, nearly 400 thousand tons greater than a year ago. Korea's cumulative commitments amount to 2 million 500 thousand tons, up 1 million 500 thousand tons compared to last year.

USSR GRAIN IMPORT EST. AT 26 MILLION TONS

The 1986/87 grain import estimate for the USSR was increased by 3 million tons to 26 million. This reflects the return of the USSR to the U.S. corn market and the continued purchases of both wheat and coarse grains from our major competitors. Wheat imports are currently estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 15 million tons, up a million from a month ago. Feed quality wheat imports, principally from Canada and the European Community, are expected to approach 4 million tons. Coarse grain imports are now expected to total 10 million tons, 2 million more than the month-earlier estimate.

USSR CROPS & WINTER WEATHER

According to an article in the Soviet paper Izvestiya, winter crops in the Soviet have perished on about 9 million hectares (23 million acres) because of harsh weather conditions. This statement suggests a 24 pct. decrease in the estimated 37 million hectares (93 million acres) reportedly sown to winter crops. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates the winter grain area sown for the 1987 crop at about 33 million hectares (83 million acres). In recent years, average annual winterkill of winter grains has been estimated at about 17 pct.

U.S. AGRICULTURE IMPORTS

U.S. agricultural imports for Oct.-Jan. 1987 reached \$6 billion 700 million, down 3 pct. from the year-earlier total, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Imports for Jan. 1987 totaled \$1 billion 600 million, 20 pct. below Jan. 1986. The overall net surplus of agricultural trade during Oct.-Jan. 1987 amounted to \$3 billion, down from a net surplus of \$3 billion 400 million during the same period a year earlier.

FAREWELL, OLD
BUDDY! SOB!

There was a funeral in Raleigh, N.C. on March 11, but none of the hard hearted attendants shed even half a tear. The deceased was the boll weevil. State and federal agricultural officials and cotton-industry leaders gathered for the mock funeral, in celebration of the boll weevil's demise in Virginia and the Carolinas. According to Asst. Sec'y of Agriculture Kenneth Gilles, "Some said it couldn't be done." But a seven-year-old program of integrated pest management in the region has proved the boll weevil can be beat. Anti-weevil patrols with drawn spray guns are guarding the borders to make sure no new boll weevil sneaks in.

OILSEEDS EXPORT
PROSPECTS

U.S. soybean exports were lowered 30 million bushels, mostly in response to larger forecast exports by Brazil and Paraguay...and reduced Soviet imports, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Some of the decline in U.S. exports was offset by an upward revision in the U.S. soybean crush. An increase in soybean oil exports this month reflects improved import prospects for a number of Asian and African countries. A reduction in palm oil availabilities and raising palm oil prices are the principle factors helping soybean oil. Soybean and product prices are unchanged, as the U.S. loan program is expected to support soybean prices.

WORLD COARSE
GRAIN PROD.
1986/87

The world coarse grain production for 1986/87 is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 838 million 800 thousand tons, up 3 million or less than 1 pct. from last month, but down 1 pct. from the record 1985/86 harvest. Important changes from a month ago include: Brazil, 26 million 100 thousand tons, up 1½ million or 6 pct. from last month and up 24 pct. from last year's drought-reduced harvest; Argentina, production estimated at 15 million 400 thousand tons, down 3 pct. from last month and 10 pct. from last year; Turkey, estimated at 9 million 100 thousand tons, up 3 pct. from last month and 10 pct. from last year.

WORLD WHEAT
PRODUCTION
1986/87

The world wheat production for 1986/87 is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at a record 528 million 400 thousand metric tons, up half a million. That's less than 1 pct. from last month and up 6 pct. from the 1985/86 harvest. Important changes from a month ago include: Australia production estimated at 17 million 300 thousand tons, down 1 pct. from last month, but up 9 pct. from last year; Iran production estimated at 6 million tons, up 3 pct. from last month and 9 pct. from last year; Brazil, estimated at 5 million 600 thousand tons, up 6 pct. from last month and 23 pct. from last year.

WORLD OILSEEDS
PROD. 1986/87

World oilseeds production for 1986/87 is estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at a record 196 million 500 thousand tons, up less than 1 pct. from last month and last year. U.S. production is estimated at 61 million 300 thousand tons, unchanged from last month, but down 6 pct. from last year. Foreign production is estimated at a record 135 million 200 thousand tons, up 600 thousand or less than 1 pct. from last month and up 4 pct. from last year.

FROM OUR
TELEVISION
SERVICE

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WEATHER AND CROP UPDATE...USDA chief meteorologist Dr. Norton Strommen discusses current weather patterns, spring planting and the winter wheat crop. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (146)

CROP PRODUCTION UPDATE...USDA economist Larry Van Meir focuses on factors contributing to the improved outlook for U.S. grain exports and describes the forecast for cotton and U.S. soybeans. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (147)

FINANCIAL STRESS OF FARMS...USDA economist Terry Townsend talks about the driving factor behind the reduction of the farm labor pool and how this reduction has contributed to stress factors on the farms through the years. Vic Powell interviews. (148)

AGRICULTURAL TRADE ISSUES...USDA economist Nicole Ballenger describes a report recently published by the Department to determine the impact and effect of government intervention in agriculture. Vic Powell interviews. (149)

USSR GRAIN SITUATION...USDA analyst Frank Gomme examines the current USSR grain situation and outlook, including latest import estimates and factors that may influence U.S. grain exports to the Soviets. Vic Powell interviews. (150)



FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1554...(Weekly 13½ min documentary) Although it has slowed somewhat in the last year, the construction of new shopping malls, housing developments and offices is still gobbling up farms and farmland. George Holmes reports on one State's effort to preserve farmland.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1543...(Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; Farm share of the food dollar; The farmer as pharmacist; Fly resistant wheats.

CONSUMER TIME #1036...(Weekly reel of 2½-3 min features) Planting fruit trees; Marshland threatened; Wholesale clubs membership; Motorcyclists to help National Forests; Male/female diet differences.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Thurs, Mar. 19, World tobacco situation; Fri, Mar. 20, World agriculture outlook, Meat production, Catfish; Tues, Mar. 24, Crop and weather update; Poultry output. Dial the USDA National News Line 202-488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. ET each working day.

OFF MIKE

Farm broadcasting has lost another friend. Gene Crawford died of a heart attack, March 7. He was 65. Gene started working in radio in 1941, and his entire career was spent at two stations in Evansville, Indiana: WGBF first and more recently, WIKY. He served as NAFB Northeast Regional Vice President. As one farm broadcaster we talked with said, "Gene handled his job with dignity" ... Surprise (and welcome) visitors today: Joe Cornely (WRFD, Columbus, OH) and Kirby Hidy and Johnny Martin (Ohio Farm Bureau Media Relations operations, Columbus). All there were in town as part of the annual Farm Bureau delegation visiting USDA officials, Senators and Congressmen. Johnny left his latest accumulation of one-liners, so be prepared ... Speaking of visiting this village on the Potomac, Don Wick (KLGR, Redwood Falls, MN) will be here in another week or so. We've lined up some people for him to interview. Which reminds me. If you plan to come to Washington, D.C. and would like us to help you arrange interviews, let us know. And the more lead time you can give us, the better ... This is somewhat late news, but we missed picking up on it earlier. Roger Bernard has left KROC in Rochester, MN, and is now working for Pro Farmers of America, Cedar Falls, IA ... In the course of a phone conversation with George Gatley (Western Ag Nets, Yuma, AZ), we learned that he recently worked with a Voice of America producer in getting shots of desert irrigation, cattle and desert agriculture ... And closer to home, our office manager Florence Kelly came through in her bowling league recently. She won the Sweepstakes Tournament. You might say, "She bowled them over." (You might say it. I never would.)

JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief, Radio and Television Division

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